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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: Austria Halfhearted on H1N1 Vaccination

REF: (A) VIENNA 1230; (B) VIENNA 1361; (C) VIENNA 989; (D) VIENNA 891; (E) VIENNA 733; (F) VIENNA 519

¶1. Austria begins vaccinating its healthcare personnel (around 280,000 persons) this week on a voluntary basis. Vaccine developer Baxter has delivered 500,000 doses of "Celvapan" to the health authorities for a 2-shot immunization. According to a Health Ministry (MOH) survey, 30-35% of registered doctors and only 10% of hospital personnel are expected to get vaccine. Last year, around 22% of health personnel were vaccinated against the seasonal flu.

¶2. Austrians' generally lackadaisical attitude toward H1N1 was reflected last week in an informal press poll of politicians and celebrities as to whether they plan to get vaccinated. Almost all of them, including the Chancellor and the Health Minister (!) said "no", claiming that they led a healthy life and had "no fear of infection." Among prominent physicians less than 50% answered that they would get the shots. As a consequence, the H1N1 vaccination "turnout" is expected to be very low; in one poll taken October 22, 18 percent of respondents said they would take the vaccine.

¶3. Austrians have, as yet, seen few press reports of serious H1N1 cases within Austria. By the end of last week, Austria's health authorities had registered only 421 cumulative H1N1 cases in Austria -- although on October 27, a school in the state of Tyrol registered 26 new cases. The Ministry of Health is now warning that the number of undetected cases could be much higher. The same day, the press reported on the first life-threatening case -- that of an 11-years old ethnic Austrian girl from Bozen, Italy who has been hospitalized in Innsbruck. She has been put on artificial respiration. According to hospital doctors, a combination of a "staphylococcus superinfection" of her lungs and the H1N1 virus caused serious damage because of the reaction of her immune system.

¶4. On November 9, the vaccine will be made available to the general public. By the end of November, 1.6 million doses for a total of 800,000 vaccinations will be available. Everybody is eligible to get the shot, but the MoH is only recommending vaccination for "risk groups" including pregnant women and persons with chronic diseases (heart, lung, immune system, cancer) up to the age of 49. The vaccine will be administered in around 150 "vaccination centers" across the country, and patients will be required to pay about \$15 for both shots.

HOH